

# EN NEWS

2200 Churchill Road, Springfield, Illinois 62706 217/782-5562

~~For Immediate Release~~

~~Contact:~~ John Muraro

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The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's involvement in Cahokia's Burning Ditch (Dead Creek) was slow in developing. The Agency received initial reports from area residents in May of periodic smoldering of materials in the ditch between Queeny Avenue and Judith Lane. At that time the incident did not appear to be of a serious nature, ~~and the Agency assigned it a low priority.~~

That all changed on August 27 when it was learned that Peter Laumann's dog rolled in the ditch and died of apparent chemical burns. Preliminary samples taken in the ditch revealed hazardous levels of phosphorous, heavy metals and PCB's along the half-mile of ditch between the two streets.

Subsequent soil samples taken on September 16 and 17 of soil in the ditch substantiated earlier results, (see attached table). At that time water samples were taken from three private wells plus a pond adjacent and connected to the ditch.

Samples from the wells were analyzed and showed normal levels of metals. Analysis of the same wells for organic chemicals were negative for two but the well at 101 Walnut Street adjacent to the pond showed low levels of chlordane, PCB's and alkylbenzenes.

Analysis of the pond water showed normal levels of metals with low levels of PCB's and aliphatic hydrocarbons which are petroleum products such as motor oil.

Based on the initial samples the Agency moved to seal off the ditch between the roads. Fencing and signs warning the public were placed at each end of the ditch. On September 17 the Illinois Department of Transportation, District 8, began installing a snow fence along both sides of the ditch and around the pond, sealing off the contaminated area to unauthorized personnel. This installation involved 7,000 feet of fencing from DOT stocks and was under the supervision of Dale Klohr, the district engineer. Cost of the fence is estimated at \$7,500 and will be paid for by the Illinois Emergency Services and Disaster Agency from the Governor's Disaster Relief Fund. Tests taken by the Illinois Department of Public Health show no radioactivity in the area.

These actions complete the first phase of dealing with this situation aimed primarily at safeguarding the public's health and safety.

Phase two will concern itself with the long-term environmental impact of the contamination, its extent and assessment of the liability and responsibility for the situation.

Phase three will address the problem of cleanup and disposal.

At this time the Agency feels there is no threat from the ditch to the health and safety of the public. There are no vapors from the contamination unless the ground in the bed of the ditch is disturbed. These will be sampled later this week for laboratory analysis to determine their content.

With the public safety issue winding down the Emergency Response Unit will turn over future action by the Agency to the Division of Land Pollution Control as provided for in IEPA operating procedures. This division will develop a program to determine the extent of the pollution in the affected area as well as north and south of the area of immediate concern.

Its primary objective will be to establish the exact perimeter of the contamination by a sampling program that includes:

1. east and west of the ditch from Queeny Avenue to Judith Lane.
2. north and south of that area from Queeny to beyond the industrial complex and from Judith to the Mississippi River as well as both sides.
3. testing vegetation along both sides of Dead Creek along the area outlined plus take samples of crops in the immediate vicinity.
4. core sampling along the same route to determine the extent, if any, of groundwater contamination.

Land personnel will also pursue reports that a buried dump exists on a three-acre site 300 yards south of Sauget Village Hall in an area bounded by Queeny Avenue, Falling Springs Road and the northern boundary of the old Waggoner Trucking Company property.

This phase of the Agency's actions will extend over a period of several months. Unfortunately there are no quick solutions to solving problems such as those that have been found here. It will take time for these actions as well as establishing who is responsible and liable for creating this situation.